The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

VOL. VIII. NO. 10. DECEMBER, 1900. ONE PENNY.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
1. Christmas Mottoes	145
2. Learning the Preparation for Work. Sermon. Rev. C. Hargrove, M.A. ...	145
3. "Tannhäuser." Rev. Edgar I. Fripp, B.A.	149
4. Applied Religion.—II. Social Worship. W. Winslow Hall	153
5. Fog, Fog, Fog. Frances Power Cobbe ...	155
6. Christmas Songs. Poem. George Macdonald	157
7. A Service for Younger Children	157
8. Are we Changing our National Characteristics?	158
9. The Children's Page	160

Christmas Mottoes.

I am come, a Light into the world.

Take joy home,
And make a place in thy heart for her,
And give her time to grow, and cherish her.
It is a comely fashion to be glad—
Joy is the grace we say to God.

J. Ingelow.

Let not the hearts, whose sorrow cannot call
This Christmas merry, slight the festival;
Let us be merry that may merry be,
But let us not forget that many mourn;
The smiling Baby came to give us glee,
But for the weepers was the Saviour born.

H. Coleridge.

Who taught mankind on that first Christmas day
What 'twas to be A MAN: to give, not take;
To serve, not rule; to nourish, not devour;
To help, not crush; if need, to die, not live.

C. Kingsley.

Gentlen is invincible.

Peace is what we all desire; but all do not care for the things that pertain unto true peace.

Thomas à Kempis.

His Will is our Peace.

Dante.

Learning the Preparation for Work.

A SERMON,

BY THE REV. C. HARGROVE, M.A.

"And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds."—*Acts* vii. 23.

"Mighty in words," for he spoke to the people as with the voice of God, and they received the law at his lips. "Thus, thou shalt say unto the children of Israel," was the command of Jehovah, and what he said out-lived all the fortunes, good and ill, of the nation, and was accepted as the law of conduct and the rule of faith. Of all prophets none had spoken words of so great might; of all legislators none had yet given law so deeply revered, so scrupulously observed.

And, if possible, mightier yet in deeds. Born of a despised and oppressed people, he had confronted their oppressor, the Pharaoh, greatest of monarchs, and wielded the judgments of heaven to enforce his demands; ten times had he smitten Egypt with the plagues of its king's tergiversation; he had led out Israel in triumph, and divided the sea to make a way for them, and provided food for them in the desert and made water leap from the dry rock to satisfy their thirst, and vanquished armies, and subdued rebellion within the camp, and through

forty years conducted an immense multitude amid all the perils of the wilderness,—so at least the Sacred Story told of him, and so all pious Jews believed.

We have no need to investigate the facts, which may be hidden under the glory with which posterity has shrouded his name and doings. Whatever the real Moses may have been or done, his personality, clothed by myth and legend, had become the greatest in history. Liberator, leader, legislator, warrior, prophet, he was one who might say of the Messiah "like unto me;" by his deeds he had made a people, one of the most illustrious in the history of humanity; by his words he had given law to that people, and through them to the world. The deeds of Joshua may have been more conspicuous, the words of Isaiah more eloquent, but neither was mighty as Moses to impress the world with his own mark, to do what would last for ever, and to speak what men would never forget.

And of such a one the Hebrew story told that he was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." The Jew, Philo of Alexandria, who wrote about the same time that these words of our text are supposed to have been spoken, tells us more particularly all that they imply. "He learned arithmetic and geometry and the science of rhythm and harmony and metre, and the whole of music, and the philosophy which is contained in hieroglyphics, and the knowledge of the heavenly bodies, and mathematics, and Assyrian literature; and he learned both of Egyptian and Chaldæan, making himself acquainted with the points in which they agree and differ." In fact he was believed to have received such an education as would have qualified him for highest rank among the sages of his time; by his aptitude for learning and his natural endowments, by his industry and earnestness, he seemed marked out as one who was to be famous as a man of science, through whose intelligence and investigations the knowledge of the race should be increased.

But his destiny was very different from what his education seemed a preparation for. He became a man of great achievements, "mighty in words and deeds;" a man whose words were not for instruction only but effective to command his fellows; whose deeds were of those which ring through all history.

Were the Jews mistaken in imagining such a combination of learning and action? Given this Moses, as the legend describes him, a man who made a great nation, and through forty years of peril and difficulty maintained its unity and its vigour—is a training in all the learning of his time a fitting prelude to such a career? Are such an education and such a life to be regarded as merely by accident combined in the one man? or were they right in assuming, as they evidently did, that this was the kind of preparation most suitable? Is it the fact that fulness of knowledge is the strongest foundation on which to build up the perfect life of action?

Is the best education we can give our children to be regarded as an adornment, a luxury of life, which they could do as well without, but for the pride and it may be the pleasure of it? Or is it the indispensable condition of making the very best of what they are, so that the world may get the maximum of profit from their lives, and they get the highest life of which they are capable?

The question is one of pressing importance. Ought we to teach in our schools just the subjects which can be turned to immediate account of more skilful work and better pay, or should it be our aim that as far as practicable our scholars should start life "learned in all the wisdom" of our day? Or—if this be quite impossible, even for the most talented and industrious, in a day when knowledge has increased beyond the capacity of any individual brain—should we at least insist upon the worth of knowledge for its own sake? Should we, while recognising the importance of technical instruction, train the young in the love of literature and science and art and philosophy, and all which we call wisdom? And for ourselves too, who though grown up should be always scholars and learners, shall we care to know those things which we can turn to direct and immediate account, or shall we value such wisdom as was that of the Egyptians of old—wisdom of stars and music and philosophy and sacred lore?

Our Puritan forefathers were in no doubt about the answer which should be given to such questions. For religion's sake they suffered all manner of pains and penalties, by their religion they ordered all their lives after a pattern little agreeable to the natural man; but this religion

was entirely founded on the Bible, and that interpreted not by priest or presbyter, but by the devout use of the natural understanding. Now this Bible was written in foreign and ancient languages and its meaning was open to much argument. The devout Romanist need not so much as know his letters, for the Church took from him all responsibility for forming his opinions. But those who rested on what they called "the written word of God" had need of every human help to understand it aright. It was each man's business to decide for himself, and his minister could only help him, could in no wise relieve him of responsibility; and to help him the minister must needs himself know all that was to be said on all questions in dispute. Hence the need so keenly felt among our predecessors of "a learned ministry."

So of the Puritan settlements in New England, the historian tells us "There has never been a society in the world in which theological problems have been so seriously and persistently discussed. The long sermons were usually learned and elaborate arguments of doctrinal points, bristling with quotations from the Bible, or from famous books of controversial divinity, and in the long winter evenings the questions thus raised afforded the occasion for lively debate in every household." * For such a community learning was indispensable, and in the history of the world there is probably no more striking instance of the reverence in which men could hold it than is that given by the first settlers at Boston."

It was in 1630 that they came over, driven from England by the persecutions to which they were subjected under King Charles and Archbishop Laud. They landed as adventurers on a coast where no civilized man had before dwelt; there was everything to do; they must plant, build, fortify themselves against attack, institute some settled government, if they would continue to exist. But "the first necessities of civilized life as yet scarce insured, the great interests of education engaged their attention."

True, the circumstances seemed of the most unpropitious; at home and abroad disasters and difficulties beset them; they might well have been pardoned if for a long while they had devoted all their energies to the firm establishment of their commonwealth and the improvement of their material conditions. "They were on the eve of war with the fiercest and most powerful of all the native tribes, who made their dwelling in the forests which girt them in; their numbers were few and their territory as yet not more that 30 miles along the coast, and extending only some 20 miles inland; they were obliged to fortify their town against the danger of encroachments encouraged by the home Government, which should have protected them. They were divided among themselves by bitter controversies on theological doctrines: an unexplored wilderness, full of known and unknown perils, cast its fear-inspiring shades over their frail farm houses. In the day time the deadly snake glided across their hearth, or rattled its terrors in their path; their night slumbers might be broken by the howl of the wild beast, or the more horrible war whoop of the savage: it was amid such dangers and preoccupations and anxieties that this poor, this distressed, this discordant band of pilgrims set about erecting a seminary of learning, and appropriated for its establishment a sum equal to a year's rate of the whole settlement. It was the first assembly in which the people, by their representatives, had ever given of their own money to found a place of learning." *

It was a memorable act; one that should be for the shame of prosperous communities who grudge money only for educational purposes, and spend with large hand only for war: that should be for the encouragement of all who strive in times of indifference to higher things and absorption in material interests to exalt the worth of wisdom for its own sake, as the only sane foundation of the strength and prosperity of nations.

Hear the account one of themselves gives of this noble devotion to learning, shown by those harassed colonists:—"The fountains of learning being in a great measure stopped in our native country, so that the sweet waters must pass through the stinking channel of prelatical pride" —which means that they could get no education except in schools and colleges under ecclesiastical control—"which caused Satan to make it a

* Fiske. *The Beginnings of New England*, p. 149.

* Quincy. *History of Harvard University.*

means to persuade people from the use of learning altogether. And, verily, had not the Lord been pleased to furnish New England with means for the attainment of learning, the work would have been carried on very heavily, and the hearts of godly parents would have vanished away with heaviness for their poor children."

So though "a poor pilgrim people, who had expended the greatest part of their estates on a long voyage," "though the work of building and all kinds of workmanship was so great in this far-off land, though walls and roof would be of no use without books, all of which must be brought at great expense across the seas, though the greater part of the people was devoted to the plough, for hunger was sharp and the need was great," though (we may add) controversies were bitter among them, and dangers threatened continually from wild men and wild weather, yet because they were not of those "who counted ignorance the mother of devotion," "all those who had tasted of the sweet wine of wisdom's drawing and fed on the dainties of knowledge to work they go and take up all lawful means that learning might find a way to live." And "to tell posterity whence they came they called the place Cambridge."

And there came from England one John Harvard, of a London tradesman's family, like most of the leaders, a Cambridge graduate, who could find no liberty of speech or worship in his own university. He brought with him his library; it has been destroyed by fire all but one volume, but the catalogue has been preserved, and is interesting reading, taken with the conditions of the colony to which he was bringing it. What did they want there with books of divinity, philosophy, poetry? Was it not on farming and fighting successfully that their welfare depended? But such books as these does he leave to them on his death, together with a sum of money, and they call the new college after his name. And presently, as the records which are preserved inform us, you may hear in the wooden sheds which do duty for lecture halls, solemn disputations held as in the ancient universities of Europe—on "Pure Being," on "the true object of metaphysics," on "the difference between the ideas of Being and Essence," and other such-like themes. Trivial! impractical! useless! you call it. Sublime, it seems to me this most practical assertion in the midst of the wilderness, in daily peril of famine and death, of the great truth that "Man does not live of bread alone." They had brought bodies with them to the New World these pilgrims, bodies which must needs be clothed, fed, cared for in sickness and health, defended against hurt, and it was a hard struggle with wild nature and savage man to get foothold and keep it when gotten. But they themselves were not bodies; for soul's sake indeed had they left the land of their birth, sought soul's freedom and welfare amid conditions far from favourable to the body's interests. And this establishment of a college is just an assertion that the soul needs instruction, that all human learning is its necessary food; that although meeting-house and minister be provided it from the very first, it is not enough, for the piety which is not accompanied by knowledge becomes superstition. That the children may grow up free and enlightened, mighty in words and deeds for the cause of truth and right, they must be "learned in all the wisdom of the world."

No doubt there were "some that had indignation within themselves and said, why was this waste made?" Four hundred pounds, it was a big sum considering the value of money in England at that day, and still bigger in that far-off colony. How much might have been done with it! if it had been voted to build homes, or clear the forest, or fortify the settlement, or improve the harbour! or kill off the Indians! but for an old-fashioned college, with all the Old World learning! Does it not seem folly even to us now?

But the advantage of the study of history is that we are not left to our own surmises of what it is wise or foolish to do under such and such circumstances. Time has given us the results that we may study the policy and the outcome of it together. And in this instance the results of this strange alliance of religion and learning with commercial enterprize and bold adventure are a marvellous and utterly unlooked for success. Colony and College have flourished together. Boston is one of the great cities of the world. Harvard is a university recognised as holding a high place among the great seats of learning. The population of the city is over half a million. There are 4000 students at the

university. It is mind not muscle, soul not body, which has achieved this immense success. Boston has supported Harvard by its commerce, Harvard has done more for Boston by imparting the light and culture, which makes it a metropolis of the New World, a mother of children whose names are famous wherever the English tongue is spoken.

Plough and sword seemed to many all that was needed to plant a new colony, and without these, indeed, the settler might have perished. But to those despised Dissenters who settled there at first, it seemed essential, even in times of sorest stress and straits, to have minds cultivated as well as soil, and that souls should be protected by knowledge as well as bodies by arms. Noble the testimony they have borne, and great their reward. The applause of grateful generations never fails them, the fruit of their self-denying labours is multiplied already ten thousand fold, and grows more abundant every year.

We have no excuses, such as might well have justified them in neglect of learning and education. We have security and leisure and means, and such ample opportunities as the world has never known before. *Have we half the esteem for the higher life of man which they had, harassed and hampered as they were by care and fear in respect of their bodily concerns?*

A soul at one with God, conscious of upright purpose, and repentant of past transgression—that is of supreme importance. A mind enlightened with the knowledge of the day, intelligent to discern between true and false, trivial and serious—that is essential to the dignity of man or woman; without it our religion will be a superstition. Thirdly, not first, a body well fed, well exercised, well groomed, that is not to be neglected, nay has little to fear from our purposed neglect, for it insists loudly enough upon attention. It is our ignorance only which exposes it to constant dangers and privations. This was the economy of those Puritan forefathers of ours, who founded the mighty nation across the seas. They laid its foundations broad in learning and piety, their successors have built after their example, and lo! the mighty edifice which is one of the great nations of the world—which yet will be, perhaps, the greatest.

"Tannhäuser,"

By the REV. EDGAR I. FRIPP, B.A.

Among happy memories of my student-life in Germany is the recollection of a visit to the Wartburg. With two comrades * I spent a Whitsuntide holiday in the Thuringian Forest, walking with knapsack and stick from Blankenburg to Eisenach. We came to the Wartburg from Ruhla, and had our first glimpse of the grand old fortress through an opening in the green wood, two or three miles away. From a height of some 1500 feet, we descended slowly into a beautiful and romantic valley. All round us were heights, ravines, woods, and watercourses associated with medieval legend and Teutonic mythology. On the right was the Dragon Rock, and by our path flowed the Dragon stream. We passed a fairy cave, and saw on our left, above the Wartburg, the long ridge of the famous Venus Hill. In the castle in the middle ages lived the sainted Elizabeth, the devoted admirer of St. Francis of Assisi, the good maid and wife, whose picture, side by side with St. Clara's, may be seen painted by Giotto in the Franciscan Church of the Holy Cross in Florence. She came to the Wartburg from Hungary, a child of four years old, already the betrothed of little Prince Louis of Thuringia. She grew up with him as his sister, and at the age of fifteen became his wife. He loved her deeply. One day, hunting in the Wald, he said, looking up at the tall Inselberg, "If that mountain were all pure gold it would not be worth my Elizabeth." She fed the poor at her gates, visited the sick, and was called "mother" by the children. But before she was twenty she lost her husband; and less than four years afterwards she herself died—leaving behind her an influence almost as beautiful among the peasants as that of the Virgin or Jesus Christ. She was fond of roses, and Giotto has painted her with her lap full of them—as she was once found when a child in a spot still pointed out to visitors. Roses are yet grown at the Wartburg in her memory. Other places are named after her, and the whole neighbourhood is more or less sacred to "Saint Elizabeth."

* One of them is now the Rev. W. H. Drummond, of All Souls' Church, Belfast.

From her, too, no doubt, have come some of the features of the "Tannhäuser" story. An *Elizabeth* appears there, who is a heroine of pure and faithful love as opposed to the lawless love of *Venus*. The goddess of false love, it was said, had her cave in the Hörselberg, and her revels might be heard at night as she destroyed the souls of pleasure-seeking men. Among her victims was the great knight and minstrel, *Tannhäuser*, the matchless singer of the Wartburg. In the ancient hall of the troubadours, where rival poets of Germany met in contest, *Tannhäuser* again and again carried off the prize, and won the heart of the landgraf's daughter. But at the height of his success he suddenly disappeared. Nobody knew what had become of him. There were rumours of foul play, and rumours of his own disgrace; and *Elizabeth* mourned, not knowing what to believe. Other minstrels, including *Wolfram von Eschenbach*, sought her love; but in vain. She would marry *Tannhäuser* or none. Years go by. Then he reappears as unexpectedly as he had departed, sings once more in the minstrel hall, and fills *Elizabeth* again with ecstasy of joy; but next moment he wounds, as with a dagger, her pure maiden heart, and horrifies the whole assembly by a wild licentious outburst of song. He is denounced and banished. He has been with *Venus*, and he must go to Rome for absolution. He must bring the Pope's pardon ere he can be admitted again to the Wartburg. He goes, but fails. *Venus* has left too deep a stain upon him. Medieval Catholicism, infinitely more stern than the Catholicism of indulgences attacked from the Wartburg centuries later by Luther, can find no forgiveness for such an infidelity. *Elizabeth* dies in sorrow, and *Tannhäuser* returns to his pagan mistress to find everlasting bondage in the Hörselberg.

Such was the old German legend before Wagner found it and reshaped it according to modern faith in his well-known opera.

Wagner believed that music could express ideas, and that an opera, like a Shakespearean play, should give noble and ennobling thought. This belief, of course, was not peculiarly his. I suppose all great musicians have held it. But in these days, when the arts have been overpowered by the sciences, and are treated as meaningless because they do not state in dull black and white what they intend, Wagner has emphasised the truth that music, like poetry, has a spiritual function; and he has endeavoured to lift the musician's art to its old high level of a redeeming agency. The Germans, indeed, have never lost their sense of the value of song. Their Reformers did not leave music to the Devil. In Germany was no Puritan psalm singing followed by Charles II's French fiddlers. But Wagner has quickened the old feeling, so that at Bayreuth Mr. Haweis can tell us of a performance of "Parsifal"—"Those whom I met and conversed with were subdued and awed. What a solemn tragedy of human passion we have been assisting at! Not a heart there but could interpret that struggle between the flesh and the spirit from its own experiences. Not one but knew the desperately wicked and deceitful temptations that come like enchantresses in the wizard's garden, to plead the cause of the Devil in the language of high-flown sentiment or even religious feeling. Praise and criticism seemed dumb; we rather walked and spoke of what we had just witnessed, like men convinced of judgment and righteousness and sin. It was a strange mood in which to come out of a theatre after witnessing what would commonly be called an opera."

I shall never forget seeing and hearing "Tannhäuser" when a student at Jena. In my diary for the 28th December, 1886, I wrote: "To Weimar; got a good place for Wagner's 'Tannhäuser.' Enjoyed an opera for the first time, and with what enjoyment! Music of the best, and the conception magnificent." And I remember saying in a letter that I thought it as fine as a play of Shakespeare.

Now, what is the conception of "Tannhäuser?" It is that of the old legend, only reversed. The permanent element of interest—the contrasted attractions of *Elizabeth* and *Venus*, and their struggle for supremacy in the heart of the minstrel—is preserved; but instead of making the heathen goddess triumph, Wagner gives the victory to the Christian saint. *Elizabeth* is stronger to redeem than the courtesan to destroy. She dies, it is true, the victim of her lover's unfaithfulness; but in her death she prevails. Her pure spirit, rising from the grave, has power in heaven beyond that of Holy Church itself. In answer to her prayer the

magic staff, on which the Pope has spent his efforts in vain, puts forth its healing leaves; and thus bringing pardon to the despairing sinner, she comforts him, and takes him with her into Paradise. A woman's love can know more of God than even the head of the Catholic world. The narrow conceptions of the divine mercy propounded by theologians and enunciated in creeds, are shattered to pieces by her simple goodness. She works the greater miracle. The impossibilities of ecclesiastical dogma become in her hands living, saving realities.

The overture, like the dumb show in Elizabethan tragedy, conveys this thought. It begins slowly, suggesting the quiet chant of pilgrims, passes into weird and wild strains, which befit the lawless witchery of *Venus*, and after a long sustained movement, indicating the struggles of the soul with the flesh in *Tannhäuser*, and of mercy with justice in the divine council, ends in triumph and a glorious pæan of praise. Thus we are prepared for what follows.

We see, first, the cavern of the Venus Hill, the home of artificiality and dissipation. The light is artificial, the faces are painted, the flowers are exotics—and the whole atmosphere of the place is heavily laden, like that of a hot-house, with intoxicating perfumes. Round *Tannhäuser* and *Venus* nymphs dance in a whirl of folly, which becomes a frenzy and at last a drunken giddiness. The revellers sink to the ground and disappear in a mist which descends and envelopes all but the sleepers. Then *Taunhäuser* wakes confused from a dream. Bells are ringing in his ears—the sound of flocks tended by shepherds in quiet valleys. He has a great longing for the open air and sunshine and the green fields, or the pure coldness of the night and the stars, with the song of the nightingale. He will escape from this prison of soft, enervating pleasure. He will be free. His strong, young manhood shakes off the cruel charm—

> "'Tis freedom I must win or die—
> For freedom I can all defy."

But it is too late, *Venus* cries; he will be received with hate and scorn; there is no forgiveness for him in Earth or Heaven; let him go, but he will return. For she, observe, is a believer in eternal punishment.

Then the scene changes. The dream comes true. *Tannhäuser* finds himself in a pleasant vale, the blue sky above and the old Wartburg in front of him. It is May; the woods and meadows are fresh and sweet. He hears the tinkling of the flocks and the song of a boy. By the roadside is a shrine, with an image of the Virgin; and as the boy's singing ends the dirge of pilgrims on their way to Rome draws near. *Taunhäuser* falls in grief and shame before the Madonna, and vows he will go to Rome in penitence:

> "O see my heart by guilt oppres't,
> I faint, I sink beneath the burden;
> I will not cease, nor will I rest
> Till heavenly mercy grants me pardon."

But he is interrupted by the blowing of horns and the descent from the forest of the landgraf and his men in hunting dress, a bright and noisy company. They recognise him, and crowd round him in welcome. Gladly would he have been unknown, have left them, evaded their questions:

> "In strange and distant realms I've wandered far,
> Where neither peace nor rest are ever found.
> Ask not! at enmity I am with none:
> We meet as friends—let me in peace depart."

His old rivalries and hatreds are clean gone. Because he hates himself he somehow loves all. Their contempt, not their fellowship, would now help him. But they do not know the bitterness in his heart; and by degrees their warm greeting, their admiration for his genius, their merriment, draw him out of himself and soothe his stricken nature in an evil way. In the sunshine of their presence he gathers confidence, thinks less of his sin, puts it by, and at the mention of *Elizabeth's* faithfulness to him, and the confession of their envy of his good fortune in her love, he postpones his pilgrimage and accepts their invitation into the castle.

Then we enter the Wartburg, and see *Elizabeth* alone in the old minstrel hall. She speaks to it fondly, for the sake of him whose voice she has heard ringing through its rafters and will soon hear again. *Tannhäuser* comes upon her and throws himself at her feet. She is filled with rapture, like a *Juliet;* and, innocent as a *Juliet*, she pours out her heart, tells him all and thinks he tells all; so simple and guileless that his unconverted soul gains further courage, and he can so far forget his sin as to take up her joyous words—

"Oh, blessed hour of meeting,
Oh, blessed power of love!
At last I give thee greeting,
No more from hence to rove!"

Next comes the famous minstrel contest. Assembled by one of the grandest marches ever composed, rich and full and majestic, German and nobly German in every note of it—a music that should run in the head of every visitor to the Wartburg, together with Luther's "Ein' feste burg is unser Gott"—the lords and ladies and their retinues, a gorgeous pageant of medieval chivalry, meet in the ancient hall to listen and pay honour to the long-absent poet. No longer sad, but, flattered and smiling, gay among the gayest, *Tannhäuser* feels once more the old rivalry of the tournament. He knows his power, and laughs at *Wolfram von Eschenbach's* conventional praise of love. It is cold and formal, and he answers it with mockery. Then a worse poet, affecting disgust at *Tannhäuser*, wins applause among the insincere and decorous people of the court,—the typical prudes and pharisees of high society. Irritated, and at last maddened, *Tannhäuser* breaks out in defiance, disclosing in his anger the depravity which had taken root in him, and appealing directly to *Venus* for inspiration. Good feeling is outraged. The insulted company rise up and leave the place, while the landgraf and his knights draw swords upon the reprobate. But *Elizabeth* intervenes. Wounded beyond all others she yet pleads for his life, and has it spared. Heart-broken and praying for his deliverence she bids him go to Rome.

Then months pass. Spring is followed by summer, summer by autumn. Once more we are in the quiet valley of the Wartburg. But the leaves are falling from the trees, and it is sunset. *Elizabeth*, pale and deathlike, kneels at the wayside shrine. Day after day she had knelt there looking for the return of the pilgrims, and praying that her loved one might come with them cleansed and forgiven. Still there is no sign. *Wolfram*, the faithful, comforts her: "They will come," he says; "before long they will be here." And scarcely has he spoken when the far-off sound of their chanting is heard in the Wald. Slowly it winds its way downward, nearer and nearer, a song of gladness, telling of pardon and peace. They are now in sight; but *Elizabeth* is afraid to look. She bows her head, and trembles as they approach; and then she sinks down in an agony of sorrow. *Tannhäuser is not there.* O misery, he is lost, and she will die! She cries to Heaven—

"O blessed Virgin, hear my prayer,
Thou Star of glory, look on me!
Here in the dust I bend before thee;
Now from this earth, O set me free!"

And *Wolfram* prays—

"O star of eve, thy gentle beam
Smiles on my spirit's troubled dream;
From heart that ne'er its trust betrayed,
Greet when she passes, the peerless maid—
Bear her beyond this vale of sorrow,
To fields of light that know no morrow."

The sun has gone down, and the stars appear one by one, and night gathers about the old castle when *Elizabeth* enters it to breathe her last.

Later, as *Wolfram* lingers in the growing darkness, a man comes down the mountain, worn and squalid and wild. *Wolfram* does not know him, he is so changed. It is *Tannhäuser*, unforgiven and desperate, on his way to the Hörselberg. He curses the Pope, while he pours out the tale of suffering he has endured to get absolution. It was real repentance, deep and terrible, and the narration of it is perhaps the most powerful passage in the poem—

"I trod unshod amid the rock and thorns,
I shed my blood in the cause divine."

Yet it was of no use. Rome, which afterwards took so easy a view of sin, and granted indulgences which were a scandal to the Protestant conscience, in the Middle Ages was sometimes as stern as Calvinism, and drove many a noble sinner to despair. It fills *Tannhäuser* with madness—against society, against morality, and against God. *Wolfram* opposes him in vain. He will to the Hörselberg in defiance of all.

But in the moment of defeat comes deliverance. As *Venus* descends to claim her own, the body of *Elizabeth* is brought forth from the Wartburg, strewn with flowers, for burial. The contrast is decisive. *Tannhäuser* falls prostrate on the bier, and dies embracing it; while *Venus* disappears baffled in her den. The lost soul is saved. Pilgrims arrive in haste with news that the Pope's staff has budded in token of the divine mercy; and the spirits of the lovers, the redeemer and redeemed, enter Heaven together, as the newly-risen sun bursts upon the world.

Applied Religion.

II.—SOCIAL WORSHIP.

Spiritual Momentum.

In my last paper I discussed some of the methods whereby the soul may attain to habitual knowledge of its union with God. But everyone who is experienced in personal religion knows well that the times of exaltation are rare, and that the times of spiritual coldness, yea, deadness, are distressingly frequent. The fact is, that full spiritual development can no more be attained in isolation than can full mental development. Indeed, even when trying to limit our thoughts to personal religion, we found it necessary, again and again, to derive from social good our final sanctions. And, accordingly, men of all ages have found their remedy for spiritual coldness in combined worship; for thereby they have been able to press into the service of the soul that strange influence of mind on mind, which, operant apart from sense, yet multiplies amazingly by being outwarded in speech or gesture. This crowd-contagion is brought home to the perceptive man a dozen times a day; it was brought home to every British soul on that delirious night of Mafeking.

Now, for the purposes of religious worship, this wayward force is most readily enlisted by the institution of family prayers. However cold a man may have become in his private devotions, he cannot gather his household around him in prayer without feeling a thrill, and an uplift, and a joy. For he is conscious of an expectation which he is bound to satisfy; and, in winning for others their spiritual sustenance, he is warmed and fed himself. Therefore, that man is truly wise who insists on regular family worship in the household where he rules. It ought to be at set times—times when the bodily wants are sated and the mind is left at leisure. Every member of the household should be welcome; but the rite should be compulsory on none. It should be short in duration, so that little children may sit through it quietly; for it is desirable that they should realise as early as possible that there is a Presence before whom even their parents are constrained to bow. Intensity and brevity being thus the rule, family worship should consist of readings and of prayers which have a bearing on the moral relations of the household, and on the many little problems that bewilder in the daily round. Most men like to read from printed prayer books, but the man who has the heart to frame his own fit family prayers will find himself richly rewarded in spirit. But better than the uplift gained by him who leads in family worship is the benefit that cleaves to all who join therein; for there is erected day by day in their midst a standard of right living and holy thinking, which may not be lived up to, but which, none the less, makes its presence increasingly felt and increasingly potent.

A still more powerful remedy for spiritual coldness is the institution of church worship. For here, the number of worshippers being greater, the spiritual momentum is greater; and, in addition, the doors of the soul are thrown wide open by æsthetic handmaids such as music; and, best of all, we have the help of a leader who, accustomed to draw near to God himself, is bent on aiding us to do the like. But most depends upon our own efforts. In worship, it is true that God helps him who helps himself; and it is equally true that he who helps himself does at the same time help all those around him to worship fervently. How, then, can we best attain to fervour in our public worship? The first essential is regularity of attendance; for being, as we are, largely creatures of the habits that our selves create, we find that by habitually placing ourselves in the appropriate surroundings the appropriate mood will follow. But habit is not always a servant, it tends to become a master, and we may find that our very regularity in church-going is dulling our perceptions, and is bringing about a spiritual torpor. In that case the remedy is not cessation of church-going, but variation in church-going, an occasional visit to some other church, in order that the slight diversity in service or surroundings may break the chains of habit. The second essential is a mind unperturbed and at leisure, and, therefore, we ought to be in our places early enough to tone the soul by prayer, and early enough to benefit from the calmative and solemnising influence of the organ voluntary. And the third essential is that each one of us should be full of a burning desire to realise his own contact with God, and that, therefore, he

should throw himself into the singing and into the responses; for such out-flaming of the inward glow not only heightens it, but also serves to set afire the souls of all around.

As regards the form of public worship, that usage which gives the congregation most to do would seem the best. The Nonconformist ritual is, no doubt, both simple and majestic. Moreover, the extempore prayers of an inspired man are doubtless more uplifting than any printed prayers can be. But ministers are not always inspired, and they tend to gravitate into stereotyped petitions of their own which have neither the freshness of extempore prayer nor the inclusive helpfulness of the Anglican liturgy. On the whole, then, set forms of prayer seem to be the better plan in public worship, and responses should be far more frequent than they are even in the Anglican ritual. Such printed prayers need not lead to thoughtless repetition; for it is easy to make a habit of reading into their exquisite phrases all the passing joys and sorrows that may exercise the soul. The hymns and chants are pre-eminently the congregation's opportunity; here there is ample scope for not praise alone, but for prayer and for preaching too. This might well be recognised by requesting the congregation every Sunday to choose the hymns and chants for the following week. Those who sing ought to have the choice of what they shall sing: their praise ought neither to be haphazard, nor a musical illustration to the minister's discourse. And every person in the building should take part in the singing. Harmony, of course, is desirable, but it is a secondary matter. The one thing needful is fervour—an outwarding of the inward emotion, no matter whether the result be musical or not. It is folly to refrain from singing, lest the ears of those around should be offended. For if each is putting all his heart into his singing, no one will have open and fastidious ears. Fervour, on the contrary, must always be contagious; and spiritual impulse is a benefit higher than any that can be conferred by the most artistic vocal feats.

The offertory is another congregational opportunity. It is really a divine service in itself, a service of praise and thanksgiving, and therefore it ought never to be hurried, nor ought it to be stifled by coincident hymns; still less ought it to be relegated to a pay-at-the-door position. It should rather be a quiet, leisurely act, accompanied by restful and devotional music, and taking an honourable position in our ritual.

The sermon is the least important part of public worship, and yet it arrogates the greatest share of our attention. We, who are worshippers in truth, should know better than this. No doubt the sermon gives more trouble to the minister than all the rest of the service put together, but that is no reason why the congregation should let it dwarf their own divine service. Indeed, in this connection, I would plead for a more considerate attitude towards our ministers. We ought not to hamper them with a superstitious reverence. They are men even as we are; but whereas, in things spiritual, we are, so to speak, mere general practitioners, they are by nature and training, specialists, men so largely gifted with the spiritual faculty that we have set them apart for a life of loneliness and thought, in order that they may further train for our behoof that spiritual gift. Bnt the service we can do them is not confined to payment of a salary. We can exercise their skill as doctors of the soul by appealing to them privately for spiritual guidance. By our constancy in church-going we can manifest our gratitude for past good impulses derived, and press on them our claim for future benefit in even greater measure. And by our living we should be able to convince them that they have not wrought in vain.

Yet our ministers ought to be allowed more freedom in the pulpit than is customary. We exercise an unspoken tyranny, which compels them to limit their preaching to certain old and well-worn themes, debating and re-affirming certain excellent but exhausted dogmas. We forget that a minister is in the pulpit solely in virtue of his prophetic gift, there to speak out freely and fearlessly whatsoever the Most High may put into his lips, not to echo back to his hearers their own pet fancies and opinions. Therefore, he should be encouraged to bring his spiritual insight to bear upon the problems of our daily life, to speak out the truth, so far as he can know it, regarding folly and sin, convention and commerce, hygiene and politics. No human interest, whatever, should be debarred as unworthy of the pulpit. Such plain and unsparing testing of our daily deeds would often, no doubt,

shock our fashion-muffled souls. It would strike us as uncalled for, and unseemly, and decidedly unpleasant. But we ought to ask about such preaching this alone, "Is it true?" And, if true, surely we ought to listen to it humbly, and let it work on us for the remoulding of our lives. But we expect too much in expecting our ministers to produce two fresh and searching sermons every week. There might with advantage be an understanding that every minister is at liberty, at any time, to read to his congregation (with due acknowledgment of authorship) a sermon by some other divine. He is in the pulpit to give his flock the best he can, and the best need not be necessarily his own.

In conclusion, let us consider one or two special adjuncts of our public worship. There is the rite of the Lord's supper. This was, in its origin, and is, in its essence, wholly admirable; but, through the folly of men, it has become so overlaid by harmful superstition that the churches would be wise to omit it for the present.* There are many other ways in which we can carry out the spirit of the rite. Indeed, as I have pointed out elsewhere,† every meal may be to us a sacrament in the true sense, a taking into ourselves of the very God. The ordinance of Baptism and the solemnisation of Matrimony are different. We should look upon them as public avowals of a resolve to act as God-like a part as in us lies towards the human beings who are trusted to our hands. There is nothing magical in the rites, nothing helpful in them beyond this, that by going through them in public we obtain thereby the reinforcement of much spiritual momentum. Lastly, for the sake of young people who may wish to take the solemn step of joining a church, there ought to be some ceremony analogous to Confirmation. A short course of special teaching would enable the minister to judge of the reality and depth of their convictions, and would enable him to point out the dangers and the safeguards that may meet them on the climbing path. Then, at an annual service, they would come forward, and the minister, grasping the hand of each in turn would welcome him by name into the fellowship of the congregation. And this open congregational welcome should surely be extended to our older recruits also, in order that their entry into our brotherhood may be adequately signalised.

Such seem to me the main methods whereby our public worship may become intense and vital, a union of souls in a common uprush which shall dower each with a deeper sense of its oneness with God. But let us put far from us any idea of perfection, or finality, in our religious rites. We must be ready to change, and change, and change again, casting off what is useless, however beautiful it may be, and gladly adopting what is helpful, however strange and subversive it may appear at first sight. Our spirits, if alive, must grow; and, if they grow, they change. As our spirits change, so should our modes of worship change; for "God is spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth."

W. Winslow Hall.

* [This must be taken as the writer's personal opinion, and not as the opinion of the *Seed Sower*. Nothing has been so harmful to the human race as the possession and greed of money, but we do not renounce the use of money because it has been and is abused.—*Ed.*]

† *Brotherhood*, October, 1900.

"Fog, Fog, Fog."

It would be an interesting matter to know what a good thick yellow fog, well distributed from Rotherhithe to Chelsea, costs London. How many useful lives are wasting their strength in the effort of their lungs to "digest" the smoky air? How many thousand hours of useful labour are stopped, and hours of useless fatigue incurred? How many horses, carriages and river craft of all kinds, are injured or destroyed? How many consumptive chests are ruined, and rheumatic limbs made to ache? How much must be deducted from the value of all the mirrors, gilding, and other damp-suffering furniture throughout the metropolis? And, finally, what inordinate quantity of hot and spirituous liquids are consumed in the public-houses, with the professed object of internal protection from the fog, and the actual results of conveying a fog of doubly perilous sort into the brains of the consumers? It may be questioned whether a bird's eye view of London under a fog, could it by any means be revealed to us by some aërial *Diable Boiteux*, would not quicken our zeal to abandon our indulgence in coal-smoke, and

cause us to adopt the practice of consuming it in the chimney.

The instructive, if not pleasant, experience of a genuine London fog, suggests a curious reflection as to how many thousands of people—if not the vast majority of mankind—spend their lives in one sort of fog or another, physical or mental. There are the multitudes of half-blind, short-sighted, dim-eyed men and women, who, in sunny Cairo, number one-fifth of the whole population, and to whom, poor souls! this bright world, so far as seeing goes, must be no better than Hyde Park in a fog. And there are infinitely greater numbers whose brains and hearts are in a corresponding state of obfuscation, and who see the little they perceive, and feel the few sentiments they experience, all as if through a smoked glass. There are people like Mr. Trollope's heroes and heroines, who are never quite sure whether it is Miss A. or Miss B., Mr. C. or Mr. D., with whom they are in love. These good folk dislike rogues and murderers almost affectionately, and cherish their bosom friends with a corresponding mixture of mistrust. Their esteem and their contempt are so nicely adjusted, and the things they desire and the things they shun are so uniformly balanced, that it becomes a matter of difficulty to know precisely whether they may be counted on as friends or as enemies, or pleased or offended by what is done for them. Passing through life in this foggy state of the emotions must be, to make the best of it, having a November all the year round.

Almost as dreary as the fog of the heart must be the fog of the intellect,—a condition of things either natural or acquired, and to be found at both ends of the mental scale. There is, first, the simply idiotic fog, when the poor, narrow brain, or the brain befuddled with sottish habits, simply cannot see the subject of thought more clearly than we behold the lamps blurred and winking on a foggy night. How hard and pitiful must be the case of those whose failure in this way is the result of natural weakness, is far too little remembered. Rochefoucauld says, "We pity the lame limb; why do we not pity also the *esprit boiteux*, the lame mind?" But we rarely feel for it anything but cruel contempt and impatience. The dull boy at school is flogged, the stupid girl is disgraced before her companions, and both are rendered tenfold more hopeless of improvement by the injustice. And in later life it is the same; they stumble along the crowded thoroughfares of life, jostled on all sides, and often fall to the ground to be trampled and forgotten. We have abundant consideration for physical palsy, but for that mental incapacity which must be so infinitely more dreary, we have no compassion.

But a long way off from the poor dull clod, and in the mental Belgravia, quite as much as in the mental Moorfields, is fog to be found. The most celebrated of modern German philosophers is said to have complacently remarked in his later years, that "there was only one man who understood his works, and that he misunderstood them." Without presuming to question whether this exalted personage himself lived in a fog, we may venture to affirm without contradiction that a vast number of students are always foggily plodding

> "Through words and things, still sounding on,
> A dim and perilous way."

There are other philosophers and theologians nearer home who, if not quite so profound as this one, have yet attained the knack of enwrapping their ideas in halos of mist, causing them to appear to their followers almost as splendid as the red lamps at the doctors' doors in the fog, but yet, perhaps, not doing very much in the way of enlightening the forlorn passenger who only wants to find the road home. For these obfuscated divines and philosophers we confess we have no particular pity to spare, and we can only recommend them to roam about the streets on one of these dark nights till they come to learn the extreme convenience of a lucid atmosphere. FRANCES POWER COBBE.

And so every humble soul that sees the Father, and lives in that sweet vision, becomes a priest to other souls. A sacramental power goes from the voice, the touch, the look, of every one who is himself loving God.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

Christmas Songs.

Every time would have its song
If the heart were right;
For love all perfect, tender, and strong,
Is over day and night.

Weary drop the hands of prayer,
Calling out for peace;
Love it is that everywhere
Sings and does not cease.

Fear, the slave, though all the night,
Silent peers about;
Love comes singing with a light
And doth cast him out.

Hate and fear and wrath and doubt
Never try to sing;
If they did, oh, what a rout
Of groans our ears would string!

Pride indeed will sometimes try
For the finer speech,
But his best is but a high,
Horrid peacock screech.

Greed will sometimes try,
Joy he would not stunt;
What can issue from his stye
But a swinish grunt.

Hope, though, has a little note
Now and then to pipe;
Piping like the feeble throat
Of a bird not ripe.

And when something has been wrong,
Grief can sing one word—
In a sad, small, troubled song,
I am sorry, Lord.

But if we were always good,
On the cloudiest day,
Find some little song we should,
Or to sing a lay.

For great Love is everywhere
Watching over all,
Over birds high up in air,
Over birds that fall.

And of songs ascending there,
Father! is the fleetest;
To the ever-open ear
Father! is the sweetest.

All that's needed to be able
Every day to sing,
Is the story of the stable
Of the lowly king.

From the stable to the sky,
Through the great and small,
Infinitely deep and high,
Love is lord of all.

Therefore piping sad and low,
Piping loud and clear,
I will sing it as I go
Through all the coming year.

GEORGE MACDONALD.

A Service for Younger Children.

THE GREATNESS AND GOODNESS OF GOD, OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

Children repeat after Teacher:

O God! we, Thy little children, praise Thee;
We know Thou art our loving Father.
Amen.

HYMN.

Yes, God is good; in earth and sky,
From the deep blue sea, and leafy wood,
Ten thousand voices seem to cry,
"God made us all, and God is good."

The merry birds, the sun, the breeze,
The hills that have for ages stood,
The falling rain, the roaring seas,
All swell the song, that "God is good."

Yes, "God is good," all nature says,
And we, who know that God is good,
Should raise our loudest songs of praise,
And sing for joy, that "God is good."
Amen.

Children to repeat after Teacher, with closed eyes:—

O God! as I am Thy child, help me to grow up as Thou wouldst have me grow.
Help me to love Thee, my Heavenly Father, with all my heart.
Help me to love all Thy other children as myself, and to do to them as I wish them to do to me.
Help me to do what my parents and teachers tell me to do, and to be willing to learn what is right.
Help me to hurt no one by anything I may do or say.
Help me to be truthful and honest in all things.
Help me to keep my hands from picking and stealing, and my lips from telling lies.
Help me to keep my body clean and pure.
Help me to keep from wanting what belongs to others.
Help me to learn, to work, and always to do right, whether at home or at school.
Amen.

The Teacher will read, or

Different Children may be called upon to read the following:—

God made us, and all men, women, and children.
He also made the sun, moon, and stars.
He made the sea and the dry land, the hills and the fields.
He made the grass and the trees, and everything which grows upon the earth.
He made the beasts, the fishes, and the birds, and everything which has life.
God made all things in heaven and on earth.
This loving God gives us life and strength.
He makes us able to see and hear, to speak and move.
He gives us our loving parents, our teachers, our friends, and our home.
He gives us our food and clothes, and quiet sleep.
God gives us all we have.
God sees us at all times, all the night and all the day.
He sees us when we are alone, when no other person sees us.
He knows all that we think, and all that we do.
He knows all that we want, and hears us if we pray to Him.
We will often think of this loving Father in Heaven.
We will try to love Him better than any other being, and be happy to please Him.
We will pray to Him for what we want.
We will thank Him for what He gives us, though it be not all we wish.

The Teacher:—

If you try to do this, you will become good and happy children.
Your parents and friends will love you, and look on you with pleasure.
Above all, your Father in Heaven will love you, and make you happy.

Close eyes:—

O God, guide to Thyself all who turn to Thee, all who rest in Thee. Evermore give us this rest, O most merciful Father, that we may go on, from strength to strength, Thy loving children for ever and ever. Amen.

Are we Changing our National Characteristics?

We are almost tempted by various little incidents, which have forced themselves on our attention lately, to rub our eyes and wonder whether a change is coming over the tone of English life. No one who has spent this year in England will deny that it has been a year of unwonted display. No one who has noticed certain recent tendencies in politics can fail to ask himself whether what we may call the spectacular spirit is not becoming daily commoner among us? It is not only that events have taught us that, if we set about it, we can contrive ceremonials as successfully as anybody else. It is that the habit of repressing show, which once went hand in hand with the habit of repressing emotion, is ceasing, apparently, to be characteristic of our people. We cannot now allow Parliament to sit without hoisting a flag on the tower above it; we cannot allow the law term to open without assembling the lawyers in Westminster Abbey; we cannot let our children go to school without insisting on inculcating patriotism in text-books upon them; we cannot let pass Trafalgar Day without hanging wreaths upon a hero's column. And the same taste for show is seen in other fields. Where we were formerly content with one Lord Mayor, we now have half-a-dozen in England alone; where orders were rare and distinctions meant distinction, we now multiply our ribbons and initials, and fling titles broadcast upon every form of wealth. Our religious services depend more and more on ritual; our industrial combinations seem more and more to study spectacular effect. The pomp and luxury of life in all departments, as Mr. Gladstone not long since reminded us, are increasing every day. Are these all signs, we wonder, that our old self-restraint is growing feebler, and that we are more inclined to boast than formerly of what we have and of the things which we have done?

We are very far from saying that all these things are wrong. In days when power belongs to those who inevitably have but little education, it is surely a duty to teach English

children what love of country means. And while we sympathise with the eloquent protest in the *Times*, which suggests that for thoughtful Englishmen "silent meditation and solemn thankfulness" are fitter tributes than tawdry decorations to the majesty of Nelson's fame, it must be remembered that unthinking people, who compose the majority of every nation, are more likely to be roused to recollections like those of Trafalgar by a visible and conspicuous appeal.

Yet, good as are the reasons for Jubilee pageants, Trafalgar commemorations, and the like, we cannot help speculating whether the tendency to value shows of this kind is one to be encouraged. Anything, perhaps, which makes for hero-worship in these days is good. Anything which arouses historical recollection of great deeds to be emulated and honoured is good, too, "lest we forget, lest we forget." Anything which helps to impart colour and gaiety to life is, *primâ facie*, worth consideration. In the old days the men of "Merrie England" were as fond of pageants and as successful with them as any nation in the world. Richard II. was one of the most magnificent princes in Europe. Henry VIII knew as well as any of his contemporaries the value of display. But Puritanism, with its soberer and loftier ideals, crushed out the old habit and seems to have permanently eliminated this love of show from English character, while the unspectacular nature of the Hanoverian House prevented, perhaps, its revival in more modern times. Is it the fact, we wonder, that this old Puritan influence is slowly waning? We have seen it in this century largely vanish from religion. Is it also losing its hold on secular things? It was the Puritan who taught us to regard display as a sign of deterioration, to remember that the days when the people clamoured for *panem et circenses* were the days when Rome decayed. Was the Puritan right in thinking, even with the echo of Elizabethan glories ringing in his ears, that the exuberant splendour, the triumphant confidence of that magnificent epoch in English history, went hand in hand with signs of an ethical decline? It would be vain to deny that it is largely this Puritan note in our character which has made us in the last two centuries what we are. But it is possible that within us there is working now a reaction against it, which may lead us to eschew simplicity for pomp, and to exchange the habit of vigilant self-criticism for the more vainglorious manners that we are accustomed to associate with other nations. It would be curious to speculate how much of our new boastfulness is due to the colonial spirit which has lately appropriated us, to the self-assertive confidence which is natural in a young community with a name to make, but less becoming in an empire both ancient and renowned. It would be a singular result of the expansion of our sympathies towards our colonies if we were to borrow this attitude of mind from them. Our old habit of reserve had at any rate dignity behind it. If it was stiff and cold in aspect, still it represented modesty and strength. We should be sorry to see it extinguished altogether in the presence of this new Imperialism which desires to make a brave show in the world.

The Seed Sower;

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE,

FOR THE HOME, THE SCHOOL, AND THE CHURCH.

Localised by Essex Church, London; All Souls, Belfast; Unity Church, London; Great Meeting, Leicester; Mansfield; The Western Union (all the churches); Kidderminster; Old Meeting, Church of the Messiah, and Hurst Street Mission, Birmingham; and other places.

By post, 1/6 per annum.

Special terms for churches taking 50 copies and above.

All business communications to be addressed to—

MR. ARNOLD WOOD,

WHITEHALL CHAMBERS, COLMORE ROW,

BIRMINGHAM.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

Snowflakes and Snowdrops.*

TO A SNOWFLAKE.

You fairy, you feather, you are such a dear
  Little white snowflake!
You'll melt, though, and vanish, I very much fear,
  Little white snowflake!
But what will it matter if down in the earth
You help on the wonders awaiting their birth,
Or rise in the mist and come back in the showers
To live in the violets and strawberry flowers,
Or breathe in the woodbine of blossoming bowers,
    Little white snowflake.

SNOWDROP-TIME.

"It's rather dark in the earth to-day,"
Said one little bulb to his brother;
"And I thought that I felt a sunbeam ray—
We must strive and grow till we find the way!"
And they nestled close to each other.
Then they struggled and toiled by day and by night,
Till two little snowdrops, in green and white,
Rose out of the darkness and into the light,
And softly kissed one another.

Very Natural History.

A bright little lizard, while darting along,
Said—"I'll give up this gliding and cultivate song;
For the world is in love with whatever can sing,
And my scurrying around is by no means the thing."

Said a blackbird, "If only some powerful wizard
Would give me the grace of that charming young lizard!
The world for such movement has ever a passion—
I'll give up my singing—its quite out of fashion."

And so these poor creatures for many a day
Made fools of themselves in this singular way.

Around the Christmas Tree.

Out in the woods a fir tree grew;
It breathed in sunlight and bathed in dew,
Till straight and spreading and spruce and tall,
It stood,
  The finest fir of them all
In that wood!

Many were bigger, and some more strong
More full of homes of the birds of song,
And a few with berries of scarlet bright,
All gay,
  And jewelled, rejoiced the sight
Day by day!

But this little tree was a perfect tree,
Without a flaw for the eye to see,
And when from heaven the white snow fell,
It bore
  The stainless robe right-well
That it wore.

So the people said, "For the children's sake,
A Christmas tree of this we'll make."
Then they plucked it off by the root and stem,
And bound
  And carried it off with them,
And they found

That when it was once more set on end,
It stood the pain like a patient friend;
And every branch, with a flaming light
Was bowed
  With gifts that Christmas night
And was proud.

The Christmas story it had to tell,
We in our heart of hearts know well,
And, joining hands round the tree to-day,
"God give
  His joy to you all," we say,
"While you live!"

Where are the Snowdrops.

"Where are the snowdrops?" said the sun:
  "Dead!" said the frost,
  "Buried and lost—
Every one!"

"A foolish answer," said the sun:
  "They did not die
  Asleep they lie—
Every one!"

"And I will wake them, I, the sun,
  Into the light
  All clad in white,
Every one!"

In Winter.

The earth is hard, the flowers are cold,
No birds are singing on the wold,
  No bees are humming;
Bare boughs are swinging to and fro,
The frozen streams forget to flow;
  But Spring is coming!

We're very tired of copy-books,
With all the noughts and hooks and crooks,
  Still more of summing;
The snow-drops still are fast asleep,
Where shadows into sunshine creep;—
  But Spring is coming!

* A charming volume of Children's Songs, by Miss Matheson. Illustrated by F. Carruthers Gould, and published by R. B. Johnson, London.